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Optimistic Bush 'Fired Up'; Feels Drive 'Is Moving'

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WICHITA FALLS, Tex., Nov. 20 — "It's tough out there," George Bush keeps telling people. But he says that it is getting easier as he tries to persuade listeners that he and his Presidential campaign are taking off, just as Jimmy Carter did four years ago.

Being the choice of 3 percent of Republicans is not a commanding position, nor even much of a spot for an ambush. But it is clear that Mr. Bush and his campaign have hit their stride, and at the best possible time for an outsider.

Last week Ronald Reagan declared, and the Republican Florida convention took a Presidential straw poll in which Mr. Bush ran a surprisingly strong third, with 21 percent of the vote. Now there are no remaining obvious opportunities for Republicans to win attention and change perceptions until the Iowa caucuses on Jan. 21. Mr. Bush is the hot property right now, with straw poll successes in three states to boast of, a revitalized speaking style and organization support in some key early states.

Good Outlook in Iowa Seen

Moreover, the news of those straw polls, and the organization, are meshing in Iowa. One senior Republican said today that he expected Mr. Bush to run Mr. Reagan a close second or possibly beat him in the Iowa caucuses. Across the state, Iowans are beginning to talk about him as a leading candidate, and he drew an audience of 400 people in Sioux City a few days ago, an impressive turnout.

Still, the "tough out there" description remains apt. In fact, the candidate more often uses the phrase to emphasize his experience in foreign affairs, and perhaps to combat the impression some people have of him as too nice for the Presidency. But he uses it accurately to describe his own situation, too.

The former Congressman, diplomat and Director of Central Intelligence raised cheers and money from old friends in Oklahoma and Texas this week as he told them how six straw poll victories in Iowa and Maine and his strong third-place finish in Florida had him and his staff "fired up, optimistic."

'A Cumulative Realization'

With a bit of exaggeration, he said here that the press had interpreted those results into "a cumulative realization that our campaign is moving."

The Bush campaign may be taking off. Or it may not. It is well-organized and in the black, but if the straw polls are a measure of standing, so are the public opinion surveys, which show him far behind not only Mr. Reagan but also John B. Connally and Senator Howard H. Baker

Jr. Fund-raising is also a test of popular support, and while Mr. Bush has raised \$3.4 million and has \$165,000 on hand, Mr. Connally has raised \$6.9 million and has \$1 million on hand.

Mr. Bush accepts the comparison of his dogged campaign with Mr. Carter's in 1976. He has campaigned 347 days in 1978 and 1979, with 37 of them in New Hampshire, 34 in Florida and 24 in Iowa. He has plainly worked harder than his rivals have.

But Mr. Carter was copying George McGovern, who used the same tactics in 1972, so he had some forewarning of potential success. There is no track record to suggest that the Republican Party is equally susceptible to guerrilla warfare, even if the Che Guevara of the movement is Yale, oil and banking and a former national party chairman.

Most of all, the Republican Party has shown no recent inclination toward deviations from conservative orthodoxy. Mr. Bush has something of a reputation as a moderate, even though his positions on most issues are as conservative as Mr. Reagan's. The exceptions are some social issues like abortion and the proposed equal rights amendment to the Constitution. But he chooses moderate language to explain conservative positions, and that does not reassure the right.

Here, for example, he endorsed a "windfall" profits tax on oil as long as it had a provision for a hefty plowback into the industry, but a supporter of Mr. Connally then accused him of insensitivity to capital.

No Apocalyptic Terms

Also, in speaking of foreign policy decisions he disapproves of, he does not portray them in apocalyptic, Communists-vs.-free-world terms. But he argues that breaking the defense treaty with Taiwan, giving up the Panama Canal and not backing Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlavi of Iran more firmly all come together to "diminish our worldwide credibility."

His eclectic campaign staff also carries no message of orthodoxy. His political director, David A. Keene, was with Mr. Reagan in 1976, and his chairman and his press secretary, James A. Baker 3d and Peter Teeley, worked for President Ford. Mr. Teeley's deputy, Susan Morrison, worked for Senator Frank Church's campaign, and a key Southern representative, Charles Snider, worked for George C. Wallace.

In Iowa and New Hampshire, Mr. Bush's strongest support comes from Republicans who think of themselves as moderates. But even in that area he has to compete with Mr. Baker, who is mak-

ing some belated gains in New Hampshire.

One other potential liability may be his last and most important Government job, as head of the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Bush regularly wins applause by saying, "I am sick and tired of these attacks on the C.I.A.," but his latest campaign brochure is vaguer. It manages to list most of the titles he has held, all the way back to captain of the Yale baseball team, but avoids the words "Central Intelligence" in speaking of his last role.

Mr. Bush plainly has some potential for gaining strength nationally. The latest New York Times/CBS News Poll showed him most favorably regarded among those with higher incomes and more education, but also among those who said they were paying attention to the Presidential election.

It may be that these people are the ones who respond to his constant emphasis on experience in foreign policy, rarely a voting issue. On inflation, he sounds much like the other Republicans, wanting any tax cut to encourage productivity by speeding up depreciation rates.

He was jaunty as he sought to persuade audiences here and in Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Lubbock, Midland and Houston — where fund-raising crowds exceeded expectations — that he could win. "Organization is going to do it for me," he said. More successes, he contended, will enable him to win in May in Texas, where he is now thought to be a distant third.

The Likeliest Bets

To get anywhere, Mr. Keene acknowledges, Mr. Bush will have to beat Mr. Reagan somewhere. Iowa and Massachusetts now seem to be the likeliest bets.

Mr. Bush jabs at Mr. Reagan without mentioning his name. On foreign policy, for example, he says, "I've been there, not lecturing on the Republican free enterprise circuit."

And another brochure, which he contends with a smile does not relate at all to the 68-year-old former Governor of California, says: "George Bush is the right age. He will be 56 at the time of the 1980 election. This is the age which business, professional and educational organizations recognize as the time of maximum executive ability. This is the age when the individual reaches the peak of mental capacity."

Mr. Bush frequently talks of his jogging three miles a day and, to underline the point, he put on his running clothes last weekend in Florida and trotted right up to Mr. Reagan.